

# THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF NURSING

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## EDITORIAL COMMENT



### NOTABLE PUBLIC HEALTH REPORTS

Two annual reports recently placed on the editor's table are of great suggestiveness and absorbing interest. One is the second volume of the *Transactions of the American Society of Sanitary and Moral Prophylaxis*, that society whose object, as stated in its constitution, is to limit the spread of diseases originating in the social evil, and whose president is Dr. Prince A. Morrow, 66 West Fortieth Street, New York. The other is entitled "Child Labor and Social Progress," and is the proceedings of the fourth annual meeting of the National Child Labor Committee, whose headquarters are at 105 East Twenty-second Street, New York.

### MORAL PROPHYLAXIS

Of the movement stimulated by the former of these two societies, we can feel no doubt whatever that it may be regarded as the most prominent and most important piece of preventive work which confronts the medical profession to-day. The frightful filth diseases of a former age are conquered. Smallpox may be made non-existent by systematic vaccination; diphtheria has lost its terrors in the face of antitoxin; the few remaining diseases that still defy research, of which scarlet fever and cancer are the worst, will soon be probed, we cannot doubt, as to their causes. The great white plague, tuberculosis, is being assaulted by all the forces of society with daily increasing momentum. There can be no doubt that the great black plague is the worst enemy of health, efficiency, and happiness that the world holds to-day, and this all the more because it has been left to the last, with amazing hypocrisy and cowardice, as if by being ignored it could be made innocuous.

The impressive and striking features of the *Transactions* are, first, that this society joins the medical profession and the laity in a common

effort, and calls laywomen as well as professionals to its councils; second, the unanimity of conviction that the young must be taught sexual physiology and morality at an early age, the only question being one of the best method; third, the courage and force with which the younger physicians protest against the bondage of the "medical secret" which makes them, as they declare, *particeps criminis* in exposing the innocent mother and child to a horrible infection, and the general opinion that health boards must require the reporting of venereal diseases and must quarantine, and, generally, control them as they now do other infections. On this point Dr. Egbert H. Grandin, of New York, said: "As parents learn, as young men and women learn something definite about the venereal diseases, public opinion will demand that the physicians be freed from this antiquated shackle, and the boards of health—whose powers are well-nigh infinite in face of infectious diseases—will make it mandatory on us to report diseases which Morrow has aptly said do not exist *officially*."

A paper of remarkable practical value in this volume is one by Dr. Helen C. Putnam, of Providence, R. I., which takes up the present status of the teaching of hygiene, physiology, and sex morality in public and normal schools. The statistics given of an inquiry in twenty cities are profoundly impressive as showing the almost complete absence of such teaching, the imperfect knowledge which teachers themselves have, with few exceptions, and the general timidity in approaching the subject. The wide-spread neglect in our schools of practical teaching on these lines emphasizes Mrs. Robb's remarks in Richmond as to the opportunities for nurses in the public schools. Those teachers who have realized the import of sex teaching believe it will come best in the study of biology, or, with very young children, nature-study. It is to be hoped that many nurses will interest themselves in this educational movement. All whose time and means permit should become members of the society. The dues are two dollars. They will then receive all its literature. Nurses who have the opportunity of speaking to parents will do well to recommend for their reading "The Boy Problem." It may be ordered from Dr. E. L. Keyes, Jr., 109 East Thirty-fourth Street, New York, price ten cents. This is written especially for parents, and is most valuable. Other literature which may be ordered is: "The Young Man's Problem" (price ten cents); "Educational Pamphlet for Teachers" (ten cents); and "The Relation of Social Diseases with Marriage" (twenty-five cents). Reprints of Dr. Potter's papers on "Venereal Prophylaxis," published in the JOURNAL in February and March, 1907, may still be obtained for fifteen cents each from the editorial office.

CHILD LABOR

The child labor report is equally sad reading. What a commentary on our big rich country to read of the "progress" reported, that one state, full of cotton factories, has raised the age limit of children from twelve to thirteen for day work and to fourteen for night work. Nurses, who know their night duty, think of children of fourteen working all night in mills! Another piece of "progress" is the working age raised from ten to twelve! Still another state has some "progress"—children's working hours reduced from sixty-six to sixty hours a week. An interesting combination secured the first child labor law in Florida,—the labor unions and the women's clubs working together. Amidst the dreary and statistical desk-talk of the men's papers in this volume, the vivid, positive, vital addresses of Miss Jean M. Gordon, factory inspector of Louisiana, and Mrs. Florence Kelley, general secretary of the Consumers' League, give a hopeful feeling, for as long as such women as these are on the fighting line, victory cannot fail to come sooner to the right, than if their brave, fearless, outspoken words were never heard.

THE PLAYGROUND MOVEMENT

As we close our pages, the public press is giving a report from the play congress which has been in session in New York. Figures taken from the report of Dr. Henry S. Curtis, secretary of the Playground League of America, show that more than twelve million dollars a year are being spent for play in this country. This does not include the amount spent by individuals for toys or by clubs for athletic amusements, but represents the amounts that municipalities, boards of education and private philanthropists have provided for playing places for children and adults, so that they are not obliged to seek their recreation on the streets and on street corners.

The popular sentiment seems to be that every dollar spent for play under these new educational conditions reduces the expenditure for the prevention and punishment of crime and for property losses through crime.

Dr. Curtis's report shows that 177 cities maintain playgrounds, 76 support play places as municipal charges, 36 are maintained by boards of education, and 69 by private individuals and organizations.

Anyone who has lived in a neighborhood where there are boys from six to sixteen, left to roam free through the summer vacation, cannot fail to be interested in the importance of this movement. Small playgrounds at frequent intervals through every city are rapidly becoming an absolute necessity.

## AS OTHERS SEE US

For the past year or two, hospitals, physicians, and students of the nursing situation have been greatly concerned over the shortage of applicants for training in our hospitals. Exhaustive reports have been submitted, papers have been read, and controversies have taken place in meetings and magazines, and the consensus of opinion has been, to sum it up briefly, that nurses' work was too hard, their hours too long, their period of training in proportion to their years of service too great, the growing requirements unreasonable, and the pay too small, with a working life too short to provide for the future.

The *Woman's Journal* has been making a study of the cause of the shortage of men and women in the teaching field, as illustrated by the fact that last winter five hundred grade school positions were vacant in New York City, and thirty-five in Chicago, while a famine of teachers existed in Nebraska and the Dakotas. The causes of this shortage are given briefly thus: the increasing requirements of teachers without a corresponding increase in salaries; the long term of preparation,—six or eight years of hard study after leaving the eighth grade; the necessity for foreign travel and for a knowledge of languages, music, drawing, etc.; the passing of a physical examination which rejects candidates having poor teeth or imperfect vision; the brief period during which they can work at their profession, women being undesirable after the age of forty and men after forty-eight; the small pay and the inability to provide for old age.

Carrying the study of this subject further, the writer of this article takes up the subject of the effect of different occupations upon woman's opportunity for marrying and cites the result of some investigations made by a woman's club on the subject: "Which class of women are most apt to marry and which marry the best (*i.e.*, marry men of the best character and ability, and the most prosperous circumstances)? The club members hunted up all the available statistics on this subject. They took an average of the individual opinions of many men and women of large experience of society and the world. This was the result: The occupations of women most apt to marry and most apt to marry well ranked thus: (1) *trained nurses*; (2) musicians; (3) business women; (4) society women; (5) teachers."

The result of this investigation, if broadly advertised, ought to have the effect of bringing in multitudes of recruits to the nursing profession, and of cheering those down-hearted nurses who thought they saw the

end of their careers in sight. Let us advise those of the latter class before it is too late to make a special study of personal attractiveness. The neat and trig effect of the nurse's uniform is, we believe, their best drawing card.

But seriously speaking, this commentary on teachers and nurses and other women workers shows that the demand for educated women for cheap labor is not being met because of the still greater attraction of home life, however simple.

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OFFICIAL COURTESIES

IN looking over a leaflet issued by a hospital in our home city, we noticed an expression of gratitude for theatre tickets sent for the nurses' use by a member of the Woman's Board of Managers.

Such little acts of thoughtfulness as this help to create a bond of personal interest between the pupils of a school and those who plan for their welfare. Too often a nurse graduates and pursues her professional career without knowing, even by sight, the women who control the affairs of the school, and these women, in turn, know nothing individually of the nurses they are sending forth. Only the president of the board who makes a short address at graduation or gives out the diplomas comes into even momentary touch with them.

We do not make a plea for patronage,—for condescension is injurious to both the giver and the receiver of favors,—but for a cordial, friendly spirit, expressed in the form of an invitation to tea or to a lawn party, at which the nurses, so shut out from all social life during training, shall have an opportunity to meet their hostess' friends. Or an automobile or carriage could sometimes be sent early in the morning to give a breath of air to the tired night nurses, who have been working so anxiously while others were asleep. If such courtesies could be extended further to the *alumnæ* of the school, so much the better.

We hear, until we are tired of hearing, criticism of the conduct of private duty nurses. Have those who criticize ever tried to give these nurses a chance to mingle with women of such good manners as they wish them to possess?

On the other hand, women on hospital boards, who only know their nurses professionally, would sometimes find in the superintendent of a school, or among her head nurses, pupils, or graduates, women of education, culture and charm, whose acquaintance would be an addition to their circle of friends.

## A SUMMER SCHOOL FOR ATTENDANTS FOR THE INSANE

DURING this last summer a new and most successful experiment was tried in Illinois. Miss Julia Lathrop, who has been working so earnestly for years to better conditions for the insane, and is now a member of the State Board of Charities, suggested that the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy should have a section devoted to teaching attendants of the insane how to interest and occupy their patients. With the coöperation of Governor Deneen and the superintendents of the various state hospitals for the insane, a number of representative attendants were granted leave of absence for five weeks at full pay, with an allowance for room and board, that they might attend these sessions. Attendants were present also from New York, New Jersey, Indiana, and Nebraska.

Lectures were given on psychology, psychiatry, pedagogy and social welfare, but the most important part of the course was the teaching of different occupations suited to the mentally sick and the application of the principles taught in visits to nearby asylums. These students go back to their work with a new view of the possibility of interesting, arousing and educating their patients by useful occupations and amusements. They intend to keep in touch with each other and to compare the working-out of their methods.

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## THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON TUBERCULOSIS

THE nursing section of the tuberculosis congress in Washington on October 1 will have been held before this JOURNAL reaches most of our subscribers. The congress is to remain in session until the thirteenth of October, but the last week is to be devoted to lectures and clinics by distinguished foreigners and to the exhibit, which, according to the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, will be quite as valuable educationally as the meetings of the sections of the congress, held from September 28 to October 3.

There has been a lack of clearness in regard to dates and announcements which has made it difficult for us to give as detailed an account of the congress as we would wish, but it is not too late for nurses who have not been able to attend the earlier meetings to avail themselves of the opportunity to study the exhibits and to hear many interesting speakers. Washington is never more beautiful than in October.

A series of special lectures by some of the distinguished congress speakers are to be given in Philadelphia, Boston, New York, and Balti-

more, and many nurses who cannot attend the congress may have an opportunity to hear them in these places.

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#### ABOUT SUBSCRIPTIONS

WE begin our new JOURNAL year with our subscription list larger than ever before, but in comparison with the thousands who, we know, read the JOURNAL each month, the list is ridiculously small.

The JOURNAL was started for its educational value, and we do not begrudge any nurse the reading of it for nothing, but we think there are many women able to pay the subscription price who should do so from a sense of loyalty to the official organ of their profession.

Each year, through carelessness in renewing promptly, many nurses have the disappointment of breaking their files. Some numbers go out of print very rapidly, others remain on our hands for months. Just why this is cannot be explained, but to those who would preserve their files, prompt renewal is necessary. The greatest number of expirations come at this time of year.

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#### THE ILLINOIS BOARD APPOINTED AT LAST

FROM newspaper items and personal letters we learn that the board of nurse examiners has been appointed by Governor Deneen, though as the formal commissions have not been received the state association is not ready to make its official announcement. We are told that the following will be members of the board: Miss Hay, of the Illinois Training School; Miss Henderson, secretary of the state association; Miss Wheeler, of Quincy; Miss Harrahan, Chicago; and Miss Matthews, Virginia, Ill.



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